

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

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SERVICE OF THE CAVALRY

IN THE

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,

BY

EDWARD P TOBIE,

LATE SECOND LIEUTENANT FIRST MAINE CAVALRY.



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SERVICE OF THE CAVALRY
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[Read before the Society, February 12, 1879]

AT the opening of the war of the rebellion it was not thought cavalry would be of any use whatever. There was a prejudice in the minds of army officers against cavalry, even of the regulars, while as for volunteer cavalry, the very thought of that was enough to frighten an army officer out of his boots. "Volunteer cavalry," said they, "humph! a mounted mob!" Nor did the War Department have any faith in it. Consequently offers of mounted troops were steadily refused during the first summer. The cavalry in the service at the outbreak of the rebellion was five regiments, aggregating 4,400 men, of whom not more than one-fourth were available at the seat of war, and the addition to the regular army authorized by

proclamation of the President, May 4, 1861, consisted of nine regiments of infantry, twelve batteries, and one regiment of cavalry. By September of 1861, however, the "sixty-day" idea had become thoroughly exploded, and the government began to believe that the southerners meant business—meant to fight to the bitter end. So more troops were called for, and in this call was a provision for cavalry. When cavalry regiments had been organized in various states and were about ready to take the field, there was "a change in the war department, Mr. Cameron going out and Mr. Stanton coming in" (to quote from a speech by Hon. James G. Blaine, made at the reunion of my regiment, last summer, at Augusta, Me.), "and a general order went out to disband all the volunteer cavalry regiments in the country at that time." I was then in camp with my regiment, the First Maine, in Augusta, and for three or four weeks we did not know what was to become of us—whether we were to be mustered out or go to the front. Mr. Blaine, then Speaker of the Maine House of Representatives, Vice President Hamlin, and United States Senators Morrill and Fessenden, did

their best to keep the regiment in the service, but, as Mr. Blaine says, "all their efforts would have been ineffectual had it not turned out that a regular army officer, who had been here on some sort of duty, came to the war department, and with a good round, square cavalry oath, told Stanton that he could not afford to disband this regiment." When they did decide to keep us, they didn't know what to do with us. Various and sundry projects were started to get us out of the state, but the government evidently didn't want to take care of us, and the result was, we staid amid the cold and snows of Maine all that winter, living in tents. We weren't exactly happy there, but we got some drill and discipline out of it, as well as somewhat enured to hardships. The First Rhode Island Cavalry, or, as it was then termed, the "First New England Cavalry," also remained in their own state during the winter, as did, probably, regiments in other states. I mention these facts simply to show that the government didn't think much of cavalry at that time.

There was some reason for want of faith in volunteer cavalry, aside from the belief that the theatre of

war was not suitable for the movements of mounted troops, the cost of maintenance, etc. The men of the south were born horsemen, almost. Old and young were nearly or quite as much at home on horseback as on foot, and the horses, also, were used to the saddle. Therefore they could put cavalry regiments into the field with great facility and in comparatively good fighting condition, as witness the famous Black Horse Cavalry. In the northern and eastern states it was different. Equestrianism was almost one of the lost arts. Few, especially in cities, were accustomed to riding, and the great majority of men who would enlist in the cavalry must learn to ride and to use arms on horseback, as well as learn drill, discipline, camp duties, and the duties of service generally. "A sailor on horseback," is a synonym for all that is awkward, but the veriest Jack tar on horseback was no more awkward than was a large proportion of the men who entered the cavalry service in the north and east.

I am reminded by this comparison, of a little incident that occurred in my own regiment. With green men and green horses, there were lively times

in the first lessons of mounted drill. The horses reared and kicked, and crowded this way and that, with annoying want of regard for the rider, whose frantic efforts to aid the animal often only made matters worse. Some horses would push forward or be squeezed out in front of the line, while it was a very common thing to see horses hanging back, or squeezed out to the rear of the line. When men and horses had got sort of used to the new condition of things, the regiment was called out one afternoon to be reviewed by His Excellency Governor Washburne, (Israel, Jr.) We got to the parade ground and into line all right and without serious accident. It happened that one of our companies was composed mostly of sailors, while the captain was an old sea captain. As the column was marching in review, this captain noticed that the horse of one of his men had been crowded out to the rear of the company, and in his anxiety to have his command appear as well as any of them in the eyes of His Excellency, he sort of forgot his military, and sang out: "Come up there, Joe! what in hell are you falling astern for?" Joe was all sailor, and replied in-

stantly : "I can't get the damned thing in stays, captain!" "Well, give her more headway, then!" replied the captain in the old quarter-deck tone.

In the course of events we got away from Maine, and trod the sacred soil of Virginia in April, 1862. Five companies of the regiment were sent to Harper's Ferry, under General Banks (N. P.), (and by the way, the famous retreat down the Shenandoah Valley, which gave General Banks his military reputation, would not have shed such a lustre upon his name but for the services of the cavalry), and the remainder joined the force then along the Rappahannock and was attached to General Abercrombie's brigade of infantry. A week or two later, General Hartsuff took command of the brigade. 'Twasn't long before one company was detailed for provost guard, and another company was detailed as body guard at some division headquarters. Then we went to Falmouth and were attached to some other brigade or division, and were sent here and there, until within six weeks after we got into Virginia the query was common among the boys, "whose kite are we going to be tail to, next?" And that was about

the way things were all that summer. The cavalry was attached to infantry brigades and divisions, companies were at various headquarters, large details were made for orderlies, etc., at other headquarters, and it was almost impossible to find a large body of cavalry serving together—hardly a regiment. I know my own regiment did not serve all together that summer, and I have no reason to suppose it was very much different with other regiments. There was one cavalry brigade, as I remember it, commanded by General Bayard, but the forces composing it were together but a small portion of the time. My own regiment served with this brigade at different periods for a few days at a time (the last time being at the battle of Fredricksburg, where General Bayard was killed), and one joker remarked, "Our principal duty seems to be, to be attached to and detached from Bayard's Brigade." Another brigade was formed in July, commanded by General J. P. Hatch, and there seems to have been several attempts to get at least some of the cavalry together, which for some reason were not successful to any great extent.

We were employed in various ways. Of course, scouting was a large part of the duty. Often we would find the enemy, and after a skirmish, in obedience to orders turn him over to the infantry to take care of, and it is not to be wondered at that the latter started the cry : "There's going to be a fight, boys, the cavalry's coming back." There was reason for so saying. The orderly duty was abundant, arduous, and the least appreciated. There was also a good deal of picket-duty ; and a good deal of skirmishing on the flanks, and as advance and rear guard ; and first and last there was a good deal of fighting by the cavalry (though none by large bodies, and no thoroughly cavalry fight took place that summer), and many a cavalryman gave his life on the field or received wounds that crippled him for life. Then there were several expeditions sent out which were successful and which were considered big things. For instance, there was a reconnaissance under General Stoneman, Chief of Cavalry, March 14, 1862, towards Warrenton, to see where the enemy was that had left the Quaker guns at Manassas and thus kept our army in quiet ; an expedition under Kilpatrick, in July ; another in July which

went to Beaver Dam Station, marching eighty miles in thirty hours ; another under General Pleasonton, in October, with seven hundred men—and so on. During the second Bull Run battle my regiment was at General Pope's headquarters, and on the last day of the battle was stationed in rear of the line of battle to stop the straggling of the infantry ("dough boys," we called them), and keep them in their places. Nor was this the only time during the war that we were put on this kind of duty.

So passed the summer and fall of 1862, and all along through those campaigns, with second Bull Run, Antietam and Fredericksburg, the cavalryman grew more and more disgusted and was inclined to be ashamed that he belonged to a branch of the service that had cost the government so much to put into the field and maintain, and that was of so little real benefit ; and he hung his head at the remark so often heard, "Who ever saw a dead cavalryman?" He could see in his services as a whole, no good gained, though he had performed every duty assigned him, and performed it well ; had obeyed all orders faithfully (and who could do more?). His

duties had been arduous and continuous. He had worked much harder than the infantryman or artilleryman, had suffered equally, had marched three or four times as much, had slept less and been on duty more, had really fought as much, yet there seemed to be nothing to show for it as compared to the glorious deeds of his brothers-in-arms who were on foot. But he had been gaining all the time in experience of the best sort, had become an old campaigner, and was now perfectly at home on his horse. This, of course, he could not then fully understand.

Now there came a change—a grand change for the cavalry. General Burnside was put in command of the Army of the Potomac. Then came into being the grand old cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac. Cavalrymen will remember that to General Burnside belongs the credit of commencing the organization of the cavalry corps. The scattered commands were gathered together and the cavalry was organized into brigades and divisions, the whole forming a corps, of which General Stoneman was put in command. The cavalryman's prospects brightened. He began to feel there was a chance

for him yet. And there was. The organization of the cavalry commenced by General Burnside was well carried out by General Hooker ("Fighting Joe"), who, it was said, rubbed his hands with glee at the thought of seeing a "dead cavalryman," and who is generally, though wrongfully given the whole credit of organizing the cavalry. The winter was passed in organizing and in drilling, what time could be spared from other duties, which were onerous, and before spring the different commands were somewhat acquainted with each other. It should not be forgotten, that among the duties of that winter, picket bore a prominent part. All along the line of the Rappahannock, below Falmouth, the division to which I belonged (Third Division Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac, commanded by General David McM. Gregg) stood picket incessantly, while the other divisions did picket duty above Falmouth and elsewhere—keeping watch while the army slept.

The incidents of the cavalry service that winter are many; but I must not stop to tell stories, or I will never get through. The main thing was, the

cavalry was organized that winter. The first grand result was a cavalry fight at Kelly's Ford, on the 17th of March, between General Averill's division and General Stuart's force. The comrades of the First Rhode Island Cavalry can tell more about this fight than I can, as they bore a noble part in it; but I know that this fight went on record as the first real cavalry fight of the war in the Army of the Potomac; and I also know that it resulted in a complete victory for our boys, and that the enemy acknowledged their defeat. Then, in April and May, came Stoneman's famous raid to the rear of the enemy—the first thoroughly organized expedition into the enemy's country. After various false starts on account of bad weather, the cavalry corps got away, and swinging around to the rear of Lee's force, cut his communication with Richmond, and then scattering in various directions, rode through the country, destroying railroads, canals, canal-boats, stations, and government property in abundance, one force riding inside the outer line of the fortifications of Richmond, and carrying consternation everywhere, returning in safety after being nine days outside our

lines. If this raid did not accomplish all that was hoped from it, owing to the unfortunate turn of affairs at Chancellorsville, it did much, and what was better it gave the government and the people confidence in the cavalry, and the cavalryman confidence in himself such as at that time he could have got in no other way, and tested his power of endurance severely. During the first four days and three nights, after we got fairly away, the men got no sleep save what they got on their horses as they rode along, and then, after one night's good solid sleep, they had three more days of service and nights of marching without sleep. More than that, it taught the enemy another lesson, and added to the respect he had begun to entertain for the Yankee cavalry.

Then followed the cavalry fight at Brandy Station (sometimes known as Beverly Ford), on the ninth of June, in which General Buford's brigade of regulars, and General Gregg's division, all under command of General Pleasonton, surprised General Stuart's whole force early in the morning, and rode all around and in among them, charging them repeatedly, scattering them in every direction, and

were only prevented from thoroughly whipping them, according to their own statements, by the fact that General Stuart had three or four times as many men. How well I remember that fight. We started out in the early morning, reaching Kelly's Ford, on the Rappahannock, by daylight, and as we forded the stream heard the sounds of cannon up the river, to the right, where Buford's brigade was already at work. We galloped through the woods over a road so dusty that we could hardly recognize each other as we rode along, and after a ride of three or four miles, reached the field just as the other two regiments of our brigade (Harris Light and Tenth New York), commanded by General Judson Kilpatrick, having charged upon the enemy, were coming back in confusion, with the enemy in pursuit. As my regiment came out of the woods it was hastily formed by squadrons and ordered to charge, the remainder following as soon as they could get out of the woods and form. Thus, before we were aware of it, almost, we were engaged in our first cavalry charge. And now opened before us, and of which we were a part, a scene of the grandest description.

We were nearly at the right of a large open field of undulating ground, with woods on our right. At our left, as far as eye could reach, were seen bodies of our cavalry advancing with quick movements toward the enemy's cavalry, who were also in full sight and apparently as active. Officers grouped with their staffs, and squads of orderlies, could be seen in different localities, some quietly watching the tide of battle, others moving in various directions. Bodies of troops were also in reserve, waiting till the course of events developed where they could be used to the best advantage. Orderlies and staff officers were riding at full speed in every direction, helter-skelter, apparently, as if the success of the engagement depended upon each one. In our front and moving rapidly toward us were the enemy's troops that had just driven the other regiments of our brigade from the field, and whose movements assumed a hesitating appearance as we advanced. A little to the right of our front was a rebel battery, which turned its attention to us as we emerged from the woods. The whole plain was one vast field of intense, earnest action. It was a scene to be wit-

nessed but once in a life-time, and one worth all the risks of battle to witness. But we could not stop to enjoy this grand, moving panorama of war. On we went, amid a perfect tangle of sights and sounds, filled with such rare, whole-souled excitement as seldom falls to the lot of man to experience, and thoughts of danger were for the time farthest from our minds. Even the horses seemed to enter into the spirit of the occasion and to strain every nerve to do their full duty in the day's strange deeds, obeying the least motion of rein or spur with unusual promptness, as if feeling the superiority of their riders in this terrible commotion. A railroad cut breaks our formation somewhat, and for a moment checks our advance, but that is soon crossed, and we reform with but slight loss of time and are again on the charge. A shell from the battery on our right comes screaming with harsh voice along our line, apparently directly over our heads, and seeming so near as to make it impossible, almost, for the left of the company to escape its effects—and bursts quarter of a mile away. My left-hand comrade, Bill, shrugs his shoulders as it passes, saying: "Ssh—that made

me dodge!" a feeling I thoroughly reciprocate, though I try to laugh at him. On we went; my battalion, in response to an order, wheeling half-right, going for and driving the enemy away from the battery, and passing by the lonely and now quiet guns that a moment before were so loudly talking, while the remainder of the regiment keeps its original direction. And see! the rebel force in our front is in full retreat, and the charge has turned to a chase. Now goes up a cheer and a yell which must have startled the very stones as we rode over them. One defiant trooper, scorning to retreat before the "cowardly Yankees," remains firm in his position as we reach him, turning neither to the right nor to the left, breaking through the ranks of two companies in their headlong speed, and nearly escaping recognition and capture in the excitement. On we went, faster and faster, if that were possible, over fences and ditches, driving the enemy a mile or more. O! it was grand; and though I was wounded and taken prisoner before the fight was over, 'twas worth it. I sometimes fancy that if I were allowed to choose, I would say: "Let me bid good-bye to this world

amid the supreme excitement of a grand, exultant, successful cavalry charge like this."

For the third time the confederate government and press were forced to acknowledge that the Yankee cavalry was good for something. While a prisoner I was so fortunate as to get hold of rebel papers, and found to my great delight that they were very much exercised over this engagement, calling attention to the fact that this was the third time—Kelly's Ford, Stoneman's Raid and Brandy Station—that Yankee schoolmasters and shoemakers had proved superior to their own cavaliers, and suggesting the removal of their cavalry leader, General J. E. B. Stuart.

This engagement prevented a raid northward by Stuart, and developed the fact that Lee's army was in motion and heading for Maryland. Then commenced the campaign which ended at Gettysburg. The two armies started northward, the cavalry of each keeping sharp watch of the movements of the opposing army. Our own cavalry was most active, meeting the enemy's cavalry almost daily, and in severe engagements, whipping them at Aldie, Middle-

burg and Upperville, on the 17th, 19th and 21st of June respectively, preventing General Stuart from crossing into Maryland at Edward's Ferry, as he wished, and also preventing him from learning the movements and intentions of our army.

Then came glorious Gettysburg, the first real decisive victory of the Army of the Potomac, the turning point of the war, the actual breaking of that rebellious back bone which had been "about to be broken" so many times before. According to General Meade's official report, General Buford's cavalry (then a division) commenced this action, just beyond the town, and held the rebel infantry gallantly until General Reynolds came up. During the whole three days the cavalry was busy on both flanks, fighting gloriously, and preventing no less than five separate attempts to turn the flanks of our army, two of these attempts being with large forces of infantry, and one at least of which, if successful, would have proved disastrous to our cause, as thereby the enemy would have secured a commanding position on Round Top, besides capturing a large wagon train. As an evidence of the services of the cavalry during this

battle, it may be said that General Custer's brigade alone lost 78 killed, 232 wounded and 232 missing; while General Meade in his official report of the battle pays due tribute to the services of the cavalry and the successful accomplishment of their duties. More than this, General Lee, in his official report of the battle, says :

"The march towards Gettysburg was conducted more slowly than it would have been had the movements of the Federal army been known. * * * Stuart was left to guard the passes of the mountains and observe the movements of the enemy, whom he was instructed to harass as much as possible should he attempt to cross the Potomac. * * * No report had been received that the Federal army had crossed the Potomac, and the absence of the cavalry rendered it impossible to obtain accurate information. * * * General Stuart continued to follow the movements of the Federal army south of the Potomac after our own had entered Maryland, and in his efforts to impede its progress, advanced as far eastward as Fairfax Court House. Finding himself unable to delay the enemy materially, he crossed the river. * * * The ranks of the cavalry were much reduced by its long and arduous marches, repeated conflicts, and insufficient supplies of food and forage."

General Lee further states in this report that the Federal army prevented any communication to him

from General Stuart, and that no information had been received that the Federal army had crossed the Potomac until the twenty-ninth. W. H. Taylor, Adjutant-General of the Army of Northern Virginia, in his "Four Years with General Lee," says of the Pennsylvania campaign :

"With the exception of the cavalry the army was well in hand. The absence of that indispensable arm of the service was most seriously felt by General Lee. He had directed General Stuart to use his discretion as to where and when to cross the river—that is, he was to cross east of the mountains, or retire through the mountain passes into the Valley and cross in the immediate rear of the infantry, as the movements of the enemy and his own judgment should determine—but he was expected to maintain communication with the main column, and especially directed to keep the commanding general informed of the movements of the Federal army. * * * No tidings whatever had been received from or of our cavalry under Stuart since crossing the river; and General Lee was consequently without accurate information of the movements or position of the main Federal army. An army without cavalry in a strange and hostile country is as a man deprived of his eyesight and beset by enemies; he may be never so brave and strong, but he cannot intelligently administer a single effective blow."

The same book also gives the order of the rebel corps in crossing the Potomac, and says : "Leaving

to General Stuart the task of holding the gap of the Blue Ridge Mountains with his corps of cavalry " Within a few months there has been some controversy in the papers as to why General Stuart was absent from General Lee's army at this time, but I have seen nothing as to where he was, and am compelled to accept the statements above as to his movements, and from all the circumstances to believe that he was kept from joining the rebel army by our own cavalry. It is on record that General Kilpatrick met Stuart on the twenty-ninth of June, and that on the thirtieth he fought him for four hours at Hanover, and in the language of General Lee, prevented him having any communication with the main army until too late to be of any service. Taking these facts into consideration, and taking into consideration the fact that never before in the history of the Army of the Potomac were the movements of the enemy so well watched, or so well known at headquarters, as during the campaign which ended with this battle,*

* Since this paper was written I have read several of the papers published in the Philadelphia *Times*, under the general title, "Annals of the War," and make the following extracts bearing upon the Battle of Gettysburg:

owing to the services of the cavalry, is it too much to claim that the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac made the victory at Gettysburg possible?

General Kilpatrick, in an article entitled "Lee's Campaign in October, 1863," says: * * * "Hanover, Pa., where, with my division (Third Cavalry Division, Cavalry Corps, Army of the Potomac) I stopped Stuart in his march on Gettysburg, repulsed him, and for three days kept him on the run in a great circle, and preventing him from reaching Lee's lines till late in the night of the second day at Gettysburg, when I again met and repulsed him, causing Lee to exclaim; "Where, oh, where, is Stuart? Oh, if Stuart were only here!" Any one of my gallant troopers could have told him, for they never lost sight of Stuart's graybacks from his repulse at Hanover to Gettysburg, three days later. * * * In the campaign of Gettysburg alone, it (the Third Cavalry Division) fought eleven battles in sixteen days, and captured four thousand five hundred prisoners, nine guns and eleven battle flags. * * * General Pleasanton, whom I loved then and honor and love to-day as a true friend, a soldier to whom this government owes more than any one man save Meade, for the victory at Gettysburg."

Major-General David McM. Gregg, commanding the Second Division Cavalry Corps, in a paper entitled "The Union Cavalry at Gettysburg," after detailing the services and various engagements of the cavalry from the fight at Brandy Station to the arrival at Gettysburg, says: "The Army of the Potomac, moving in pursuit of Lee, was required to protect itself on one side from any possible attack of the enemy, and to extend its protection on the other side to Washington. These successful engagements of our cavalry left our infantry free to march, without the loss of an hour, to the field of Gettysburg, where the Army of the Potomac was destined to deliver the blow which, more than any other, was to determine the issue of the rebellion." And in speaking of the battle of Gettysburg, General Gregg says: "On the third, during that terrific fire of artillery which preceded the gallant but unsuccessful assault of Pickett's Division on our line, it was discovered that Stuart's cavalry was

After Gettysburg, and during the remainder of the campaigns of that summer, the advance to the Rapidan, the return to Centreville, and the sec-

moving to our right, with the evident intention of passing to the rear, to make a simultaneous attack there. What the consequence of the success of this movement would have been, the merest tyro in the art of war will understand. When opposite our right, Stuart was met by General Gregg, with two of his brigades (Colonels McIntosh and Irvin Gregg) and Custer's brigade of the Third Division, and, on a fair field, there was another trial between two cavalry forces, in which most of the fighting was done in the saddle, and with the troopers' favorite weapon—the sabre. Without entering into the details of the fight, it need only be added, that Stuart advanced not a pace beyond where he was met; but after a severe struggle, which was only terminated by the darkness of night, he withdrew, and on the morrow, with the defeated army of Lee, was in retreat to the Potomac."

Major-General Alfred Pleasanton, Commander of the Cavalry Corps, closes a review of the campaign of Gettysburg, as follows: "To close, as I began, that justice has not been done to the cavalry in the campaign of Gettysburg, the above review in my opinion, clearly shows it. I can say that they had greater opportunities for distinction than their companions in arms, and they so fully availed themselves of these advantages that, without their services, the record of the campaign would be like the play of 'Hamlet' with the part of 'Hamlet' left out. Further, the renown for all that is great and glorious in cavalry warfare they established for themselves in that campaign, made them the peers of the famous troopers of the Great Frederick, and the splendid horsemen who swept over the plains of Europe led by the white plume of the dashing Murat."

Colonel William Brook-Rawle, in a paper entitled "The Right Flank at Gettysburg," says: "But little has been written of the operations of the cavalry during the battle of Gettysburg. So fierce was the main engagement, of which the infantry bore the brunt, that the 'affairs' of the cavalry have almost

ond advance to the Rapidan, the cavalry was always busy, pounding away at the enemy at every opportunity and finding many opportunities, meeting their cavalry often in good square fight and whipping them as a general thing, and not being driven by the enemy's infantry. In an order issued by General Meade, October seventeenth, he bears testimony to the activity, zeal and gallantry of the whole cavalry corps, and to the efficient and arduous services rendered by the corps in all the recent operations.

Then came the advance into the wilderness and the campaign at Mine Run. During this movement the cavalry had its share of the work. The division

passed unnoticed, yet on the right flank there occurred one of the most beautiful cavalry fights of the war, and one most important in its results. It may be confidently asserted that, had it not been for General D. McM. Gregg and the three brigades under his command on the Bonaughtown road, on July 3, 1863, that day would have resulted differently, and, instead of a glorious victory, the name of 'Gettysburg' would suggest a state of affairs which it is not agreeable to contemplate."

Major-General Henry Heth, of the Army of Northern Virginia, in a paper entitled "Why Lee Lost at Gettysburg," says: "The failure to crush the Federal army in Pennsylvania in 1863, in the opinion of almost all the officers of the Army of Northern Virginia, can be expressed in five words—the absence of our cavalry."

E. P. T.

to which I belonged (then the Second, under our old commander, General Gregg) had the advance on the left, and had some severe fighting to do, as well as doing lots of scouting, picketing, etc., while another division had the advance on the right.

During the next winter the cavalry scouted and picketed much as the winter before, while several expeditions were sent out in different directions, cutting the enemy's communications and destroying much property. One of these expeditions, with which was my regiment, visited Luray Valley and destroyed a large manufactory in which were 80,000 confederate government saddles, finished and in all stages of manufacture, as well as flouring mills and other property. Amusing incidents occurred on this expedition every hour—in fact we laughed all the time—but I musn't stop to tell stories. During this winter, also, the expedition known as "Kilpatrick's Raid to Richmond" took place, and if it was not the success that was anticipated 'twas not owing to want of gallantry or power of endurance on the part of the men.

In the spring of 1864 General Sheridan was placed

in command of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac, and we became members of "Sheridan's Cavalry," than which no prouder title can be borne. Who General Sheridan was, nobody at that time knew. Indeed, when the news of his appointment to this command was sent over the wires, some of the newspapers (who all through the war knew more about the army and the movements than did those who were at the front) announced in big head lines, that General Sherman was to command the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac. The cavalry, the people, and the enemy knew more about General Sheridan soon after that. Then commenced the grand campaign which resulted in settling the army down before Petersburg. The cavalry staid with the army in the wilderness a few days until things got somewhat settled, doing some good fighting in the meantime, and then, on the ninth of May, swung off around the left of Lee's army and started for Richmond on Sheridan's first raid. We were gone outside of our lines seventeen days, living on the country, cutting railroads, destroying property, and making things lively generally. Dur-

ing this trip we had several engagements, and some of them severe ones, including a hot fight inside the outer line of the fortifications of Richmond and within sound of the bells of the city, on which occasion, it was said, Jeff. Davis and his cabinet were out on a hill—"Academy Hill," I think it was,—to see the Yankee cavalry fall into a trap set by General Stuart, and be captured. But General Stuart received his death wound in a fight with us the day before, and the Yankee cavalry refused to be captured, coming out of the trap with flying colors. Then we began to know who General Sheridan was.

When we rejoined the Army of the Potomac we received the joyful intelligence that General Grant proposed to "fight it out on this line if takes all summer," and that he had been doing big things in our absence. The army was then on the North Anna. Hardly had we got within our lines and had time to read our mail (the collection of more than three weeks), than we were on the move again. General Grant had got ready for another flank movement, and the cavalry being there must take the advance. So off two divisions started, with the

Sixth Corps, toward the left, crossing the Pamunkey near Hanover Town Ferry, and the next day, twenty-eighth of May, we found the enemy near what was known as Hawes Shop, and fought and won what General Grant pronounced the most severely contested cavalry engagement of the war. Still we kept working to the left, skirmishing continually, scouting always, picketing all the time, until June sixth, at which time the army was in the vicinity of some of the battle-fields of the Peninsular campaign of two years before. Then we started off on another expedition, going this time to the right.

This was an expedition against the Virginia Central Railroad, with instructions to General Hunter, who was coming down from the Valley, and whom it was hoped to meet near Charlottesville. We got as far as Trevillian Station on the Virginia Central, half a dozen miles from Gordonsville, and there met the enemy in strong force. A severe engagement ensued which lasted all day, and in which we were finally victorious, scattering and driving the enemy so we could find no signs of him in any direction the next day. A day was spent in destroying the

railroad for miles, and then General Sheridan, hearing nothing from General Hunter, and the fight having been so severe as to draw heavily upon his ammunition, thought best to return to the Army of the Potomac, which was done. The march back was more tedious than the march there, the June sun and the enemy making it hot for us indeed, but we reached the James River, where we were under the protection of the gunboats, on the twenty-first day after leaving our lines, and the next day crossed the river and were again with the glorious old Army of the Potomac, which was then settling down before Petersburg. But we got no rest, even now. General Wilson's cavalry, of the Army of the James, had been off on a raid upon the enemy's communications, on the left, and it was feared was in close quarters, so we were sent out to help him back. He got back, though, without any of our help. Finally, on the fourth of July, we went into camp near Light House Point and got a few days rest, having, since we crossed the Rapidan on the fourth of May,—just two months before—slept two nights in the same place but twice (both instances

being on picket), and been outside of our lines more than half the time. We thought that was what might be called active campaigning, but we rather enjoyed it than otherwise. I don't mean to say that we enjoyed the fighting, of which we had full share,—there were very few who did enjoy that—but we did enjoy the variety, the riding over the country every day in a new locality, and in fact the whole service except the fighting, and even the excitement of that, and the glorious exaltation of victory, were enjoyable. It may be asked what was the good of these two expeditions. They were a part of General Grant's grand plan, which every one now admits was successful, and were as successfully carried out as any part of the plan. General Grant says of them, incidentally, that they had the effect of drawing off the whole of the enemy's cavalry and making it comparatively easy to guard our trains. Another thing: General Grant's idea was to wear the enemy out by attrition, and the enemy's cavalry got all the "attrition" they wanted.

Soon after getting into camp in front of Petersburg, General Sheridan left us for the Shenandoah

Valley, taking with him two divisions of the Cavalry Corps and leaving the division to which I belonged with the Army of the Potomac. The Sixth Corps went, also, and was put under his command, as I remember it, after arriving in the Valley. The glorious deeds of the forces under General Sheridan in the Valley are on record, and are proudly remembered by all so fortunate as to have served under him there, be he cavalryman, infantryman or artilleryman, so there is no need of my dwelling upon that service, only to say that everybody knows that in that campaign the cavalry bore well its part.

The division that remained with the Army of the Potomac (Second, still under command of General Gregg) during the remainder of the summer moved from right to left and from left to right of the line in front of Petersburg without any regard for rest or comfort. Twice it was sent across the James to the extreme right to make a demonstration and attract the attention of the enemy while important movements were going on elsewhere. The first was at the time of the explosion of the Mine ; the result of the second was the capture of the Weldon Rail-

road, on the left, by the Second Corps, thus cutting valuable communications of the enemy with a portion of the country from which he largely drew supplies. Indeed, rebel papers stated or else the rebel pickets told us (for we often had communication with the pickets) that the day after the railroad was captured the rebel soldiers were put on half rations and their horses on half forage. And after we had called the enemy up to the right and given the Second Corps an opportunity to capture the road, we had to hurry back, go down to the left and help them hold it, which was no small job as the enemy made a desperate attempt to re-capture it, and a severe engagement was fought at Reams Station, which only darkness, and the arrival of the Ninth Corps during the night, prevented being a defeat on our part. Various other movements were made that summer, and a grand forward movement was attempted in October, in all which the cavalry was conspicuous. Then there was picket duty in abundance when there was nothing else to do. I would like to relate a few incidents of that summer's campaign, but I must not stop to tell stories. We weren't idle that summer

or fall—not at all. Matters remained about the same with us until we got into winter quarters, when we had a steady job to picket on the left and rear, mingled with scouting plenty, and now and then a bit of a raid on the enemy's railroads.

In February a movement was made which resulted in extending our lines a couple miles to the left, to Hatcher's Run. As usual, the cavalry had the advance, and when the fight began naturally had the left. We fought by the side of the Fifth Corps all day long, and held our own. I remember one circumstance in connection with this movement which shows the genius of General Grant. His famous railroad from City Point to the left of the army for the transportation of supplies, is well known. Well, the day after the fight we were sent to the left and rear to go on picket, and soon after leaving the battle ground we came across a gang of soldiers busily at work extending that railroad to keep pace with the extension of the lines, and it is probable the road was not more than a day behind the army.

Then came the last, grand campaign. The division was then in command of General Crook (now

famous as an Indian fighter), our loved General with whom we had served more than two years, General Gregg, having resigned during the winter. A change had also been made in the division, a new brigade having been formed, called the Third, to which my regiment was assigned, which brigade was in command of Colonel Charles H. Smith, colonel of my regiment and for most of the two previous glorious summer campaigns commanding it. As we left camp on the morning of March 29, 1865, we were cheered at seeing General Sheridan (who had just arrived from the Shenandoah) and his staff, as well as his famous scouts, followed by the cavalry he had with him in the Valley. Then we were sure of victory. We didn't care how many troops were in front, rear, or on either flank, or where we were, if only "Little Phil." were with us. We started off with cheerful hearts, marching that day to Dinwidie Court House, and being at the extreme left of the lines. The next day it rained and we killed time trying to keep comfortable.

The thirty-first was an active day indeed. A portion of my brigade was sent out in the morning on

picket while we remained quietly in camp. About eleven o'clock lively firing was heard in the direction of the pickets. Soon an orderly rode up to Colonel Cilley. (J. P.) commanding my regiment, with the order : "Go to the aid of the pickets, at once." We mounted, rode a mile or more, and drew up in line in a large open field, behind a rising ground. On the right was the road and resting on it, woods—pine with no undergrowth or brush. On the left, a short distance away, were woods. In front we could see only the hill. The firing had stopped—all was quiet. We learned, by one of those mysterious ways by which orders and plans sometimes become known to all the command almost before the general had settled what they were to be, that we were there to hold the crossing of a creek—"Great Cat Tail Creek" we were then told it was, but since then it has been called by various names. One battalion under command of Captain Myrick (J. D.) was sent out scouting beyond the pickets. The order was passed through the remainder of the regiment to be "prepared to fight on foot" at any time. The men were already counted off by fours, and now the reins of

horses Nos. one, two and three were given to No. four man to hold with orders to "Look out for my grain," "Take care of my haversack," and a thousand-and-one instructions. His part in the coming action was to take care of the four horses and their loads. The sabres were strapped to the saddles and all superfluities taken from the person and fastened to the saddle or put in the saddle-bags. The grain bags and all baggage were strapped firmer on the saddles—they might go through some heavy shaking before the riders again got to them. The cartridge-boxes were filled to their utmost capacity—the spare ammunition in the saddle-bags were put in the pockets—the carbines were examined,—the "Spencers" loaded carefully with their seven deadly messengers, and the "Henrys" wound up to unwind and set flying sixteen humming birds to sing in the ears of the enemy. The canteens that were full were thrown over the shoulders—there was no knowing how much we might want a drink of water before we again saw our horses. The "traps" were taken care of by each one as if sure of coming back, while at the same time everything of value was left

with the led horses as if there was a chance of not returning. Then the boys took it easy till called for—sitting down, lying down, sleeping even, writing (perhaps the last line home), smoking, laughing, joking, anything but what looked like expecting every moment to fight, but all knowing their places and ready to "fall in" at the first note of warning.

At the headquarters of the regiment a group of officers was collected, talking over the prospects of a fight. A captain borrowed a needle and thread, with which he sewed up some money in the watch-pocket of his pants, concealing the same as well as possible, saying—"No knowing what may happen—I may go to Richmond this trip." Another officer took the hint and sewed his up in his vest. The adjutant inquired the time. "Twenty minutes of one." "In about four hours," said he, "the rebs. will come down on us with one of their thundering sunset charges." A young lieutenant who had not yet christened his shoulder-straps in the smoke of battle, and who was evidently a little anxious as to his behavior in his first fight as an officer, said, with a nervous smile: "I'm afraid they won't wait till then."

Hark ! there is firing in front—the scouts have run into the enemy. “ ‘Tention !” shouts the Colonel, and the men spring into position as by one motion and wait further orders. ’Tis only a scattering fire, soon quieted, and the men settle back into their lazy, listless positions of before. Not long do they remain so this time, however, for suddenly the firing commences again, and nearer and more rapidly than before. Evidently Captain Myrick’s battalion is being driven back, though their carbines are rattling heartily, and the boys know the battalion too well to think they are retreating any faster than they can be pushed. Colonel Smith, commanding brigade, and his staff, ride to the top of the hill in front. Colonel Cilley calls the men to attention again, and now they remain so. An orderly from the front rides up to Colonel Smith, speaks a moment, and a staff officer starts from him toward the headquarters of the regiment. The boys know by the intuition of experience what that means and are ready. Colonel Cilley and his staff mount, the men anticipate his first order, and almost before he opens his mouth are ‘Fours—Right” and marching to the road at a quick

step. We are but a few rods from the top of the hill, yet we can see that Colonel Smith is anxious—we don't move fast enough. As if a staff officer might not give the order just right, Colonel Smith himself rides to Colonel Cilley and tells him: "Move faster; they are driving Captain Myrick's battalion; you must stop them; deploy your men across the field to the left of the road and move to the crest of the hill as fast as possible." The men hardly needed instructions. One motion of Colonel Cilley's arm and each one seemed to know just where he was wanted, and in as quick time as the regiment ever made on foot they are in line across the field and moving for the crest. As we got to the top what a sight greeted our eyes! The woods on the right extended along the road to the creek—some two hundred yards; on the left of the road, directly opposite the regiment, was the open field to the creek, which was skirted on both sides by a scrubby thicket, and beyond the creek were woods; on the left of the field and of the regiment were woods nearly to the creek. The regiment which had been on picket (Second New York Mounted Rifles)

held the woods on the right of the road, while my regiment extended across the field to the woods on the left. The ground was a gentle descent. As we reach the top of the hill the road close to us was filled with wounded men and officers on their way to the rear, mixed in with the led horses of Captain Myrick's battalion, while a little farther on the men of the battalion were fighting manfully but being slowly pressed back, and less than a hundred yards away. In the road, just coming out of the thicket, was a body of cavalry, charging towards the regiment, swinging their sabres and yelling like demons, and in the field was a strong line of infantry advancing and keeping up a lively fire. One moment later and the position had been lost. The instant the boys could see over the hill, hardly waiting for the command to charge, which rang out in clear tones from Colonel Cilley, they opened fire and with a cheer started for the enemy. It was no place for a standing fight—'twas too late for that. A quick, impulsive charge was all that could save us then, and that might not, and the men understood it. I had eyes only for that column of cavalry in

the road. On they came, brave fellows, and for a moment it seemed as if a hand-to-hand fight—mounted rebels against dismounted boys in blue—was inevitable. But the repeaters in the hands of our boys were too much for them. On they came, but came no nearer. Men and horses went down and the head of the column remained in nearly the same place. It was like a stream of water thrown from an engine against a heavy wind—a more powerful stroke on the brakes sends the stream a bit further now and then, but the wind drives it back and keeps it just there. 'Twas only for a moment—they found 'twas no use and retreated, the infantry in the field going with them. Our boys followed them, passing in their headlong charge, killed and wounded rebel officers and men, quickly gained the thicket and took position there, and in the road soon had up a breast-work of fence rails which but a moment before had divided the field from the road in the usual zig-zag line. The flurry was over—we had only to hold the position after having taken it.

We remained on the line, changing position somewhat, strengthening weak places, making arrange-

ments as thought best for holding the position as long as possible, the men firing occasionally and the rebels also firing, occasionally having a man killed or wounded and we hoped occasionally returning the same compliment to the rebels, till between four and five o'clock. At this time some changes were made in the disposition of the line, and I met the young lieutenant again, who smilingly remarked : "I told you I was afraid they wouldn't wait so long before they made a charge on us." We talked about the events of the day for a moment, when we heard a tramping in the woods across the creek, and the cry, "there they come !" And coming they were, through the woods and fording the creek up to their waists, scarcely fifty yards distant, just commencing their "thundering sunset charge." The lieutenant I never saw afterwards. He was killed during the attempt to repulse this charge, leaving no stain on his courage, and brightening his shoulder straps in this blood-christening.

Our boys, who had got tired of fighting in the slow manner and were sitting down, lying down, watching every movement of the enemy, ready for

duty at the first call, but still in anything but the position of a soldier, sprang to their places and in an instant were pouring a heavy fire into the advancing foe. The boys fought bravely—the enemy advanced as bravely, keeping up a heavy fire and taking our fire without being checked in the least. They had a piece or two of artillery in position, and were throwing shot and shell into the woods, rattling down among us twigs and large limbs as well as their iron hail, while above all the noise and confusion, the rattling of the carbines, the roar of the artillery, the screaming and bursting of shells, the commands of officers and shouts of men, rose the shrieking, whining, rebel charge yell. We were slowly pressed back, fighting for every inch of ground. We were not being driven—it was no retreat—we were fairly pushed, crowded back. It was a step backward, firing as we went, then turn around and walk a step or two, then turn again and fire (and our repeaters did murderous service we afterwards learned) Men were getting out of ammunition and were going to the rear, but were stopped by the officers and ordered to get cartridges from the wounded men.

The enemy was crowding us back—slowly but surely—our ammunition was almost gone, and our thinned ranks were giving way faster and faster. Back—beyond the field in which we had left the led horses, for they were taken further to the rear at the first of the fight—and still back, till we were retreating as fast as possible, hoping to reach a place of safety soon but not knowing how far we might be obliged to travel before reaching it—straining every nerve to prevent being taken prisoners, and still fighting as vigorously as we could—when suddenly as we came to a turn in the road we saw a strong line of our own men behind a breast-work of rails but a short distance from us. This gave us new vigor, and in a few moments we were behind the works and could stop to breathe. The enemy's mounted men followed to the bend in the road, when, seeing the force, they quickly retreated. We had held the position till a strong line had been formed in our rear—had done all and more than had been expected of us—and our duty was done.

This description, of course, relates only to what I saw myself, but the rest of the division, and some

of the other divisions of cavalry also had hot work. The situation was this. General Lee had that morning successively driven two divisions of the Fifth Corps back, and was endeavoring to get in rear of our cavalry, which was thus left without support, hoping to whip the cavalry thoroughly, check the advance of our army, and gain a position at Five Forks. The force that we drove back at the opening of the fight was sent there to attract attention and keep a force there while a large force of the enemy was sent to the right of our cavalry to flank it if possible. There the intentions of the enemy were defeated by the stubborn resistance of our cavalry. General Sheridan says of this engagement: "All the enemy's cavalry and two divisions of infantry were unable to drive five brigades of cavalry, dismounted, from an open plain in front of Dinwiddie Court House." Then the enemy made an attack along the whole line, which succeeded in driving us back, but not until other movements of our forces were completed, the line was formed in our rear, and the victory at Five Forks was possible.

As an evidence of the severity of this fight I may

be allowed to say that my regiment went into the engagement with nineteen officers and not more than three hundred and twenty-five men, and had one officer killed and four wounded (one of whom died of his wounds) and fourteen men killed, sixty-eight wounded, and twelve missing (all the missing being wounded and left on the field)—an aggregate of ninety-nine—nearly one in three. We thought that was fighting.

Is it necessary to mention the services of the cavalry at Five Forks, where they fought all day alone, charging the enemy's breastworks, squarely, and keeping the enemy's attention while the infantry was getting into position ready for the last grand movement which resulted in complete victory?

Petersburg was captured, Richmond evacuated, and the rebel army was in full retreat. General Sheridan was put in command of a force of infantry as well as the cavalry, and away we went after the flying enemy. That was fun, and for the first time during the war, fighting became a real pleasure. There was plenty of it, too, but the prestige of victory hung over all. Up in the morning early, hardly waiting for breakfast, the cavalry took the advance,

with General Lee's wagon trains, which were moving on a road parallel with the one we were on, in sight now and then as the lay of the land allowed. On arriving at the first cross road leading to the road on which the enemy was retreating, the division in the advance took the cross road and charged upon the enemy, while the remainder of the column moved on. At the next cross road the next division started for the retreating enemy, and so on. The division that first left the column was driven back, but followed along the line of march in time to get in on another cross road, and this time success greeted the whole line, the enemy was driven, the train reached and a large part of it destroyed, and prisoners almost beyond number captured, including seven general officers. And the infantry was right up with us all the time, the Sixth Corps doing its full share in this last grand achievement, which is known as the battle of Sailor's Creek. I have never heard any complaint from the infantry of hard marching during this campaign, but one thing is certain, the infantry never before was so well marched or so well handled as during this campaign, under

the leadership of that glorious little cavalryman, Phil. Sheridan. They kept up with the cavalry, and were ready and in condition to fight at any moment, taking gallant part in the exciting and glorious work. This was on the sixth of April. The seventh was much like the sixth, pursuing the retreating enemy and striking him at every opportunity.

On the eighth the triumphant march was continued. Just before dark the division to which I belonged sent out a strong detail as a foraging party, for Phil. Sheridan cared little for base of supplies, though he made no boasts concerning the matter, and soon after that we halted at a cross roads near a railroad, to allow another command to go by. While here we heard the whistle of an approaching locomotive, and were much astonished thereat. A moment later a train came thundering along, stopping close by us, and from the engine a cavalryman, the impromptu engineer, sang out : "Custer has charged into Appomattox Station and captured three trains, and here's one of them ; pitch in, boys !" We did pitch in, helping ourselves to rations and forage in abundance, as well as to such clothing as we wanted, and

an hour or two later laughed at the foraging party as they returned from their expedition, telling them we could forage if we weren't detailed for the purpose.

That night we went into camp near Appomattox, had a good square meal, turned in, and most of the men were enjoying their first nap, when orders came for the brigade to move out immediately. Being sergeant-major, I had to notify the company commanders, and if ever a man got thoroughly cursed 'twas me that night. We were soon on the march, and learned that we were going out to hold a road. We marched through burning wagon trains and over the *debris* of the retreating army, and about midnight ran into the enemy. A short skirmish and a line was formed, dismounted, across the road, on the top of the hill looking over into Appomattox Court House, a breastwork of rails hastily thrown up, and the pickets posted, and then the rest of us went to sleep. Sleep was sweet that night, with no thought of the great events of the morrow. With the first break of dawn the enemy commenced the attack, and fought bravely to drive us away and

get the road. We did not know at the time, as it afterwards proved, that that road was the road to Lynchburg and the only way Lee could escape, and that upon us rested the hopes of the whole Army of the Potomac and of the country, but we fought as stubbornly as though we knew this, for all felt that the end was near. The enemy brought five, aye, ten times our numbers against us, but they seemed dispirited by their retreat and did not fight with their old-time vim. By a flank movement with a large force of infantry, and by hard work, they finally, at nine or ten o'clock, pushed us away from the road, and had nearly driven us from the field, when up came the colored troops of the Twenty-fifth Corps, who took our places, charged across the field, and the war was over. An hour later we marched back over the field, up to the top of the hill where the line was formed at midnight, and from there saw the two armies resting on their arms, and the flag of truce.

I have always claimed that the colored troops made the last charge and fired the last shot in the Army of the Potomac, and I have also always claimed

that the cavalry fought the last fight of the Army of the Potomac. General Sheridan says of this morning's work : "The enemy discontinued his attack as soon as he caught sight of the infantry, and then up went the white flag." The comrades will understand that I have spoken of my own regiment, brigade, or division, because I know more about them, and only as representatives of the whole cavalry corps of the Army of the Potomac.

In closing this imperfect sketch of the cavalry service, I will only say that if there is anything I am proud of, it is that I was a cavalryman in the grand old Army of the Potomac during the war of the rebellion.

